



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Thursday, March 13, 2008

**CONTACT:** Julie Burk  
Coordinator, Montana Main Street Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
406-841-2756

Marissa Kozel  
Montana Department of Commerce  
406-841-2772

## **Montana Department of Commerce Announces New Application Cycle for the Montana Main Street Program**

(HELENA) – The Montana Main Street program, which promotes the revitalization of historic downtown business districts, announced that it will open up a new cycle of applications on April 1, 2008. Two to three new communities will be selected for Main Street designation.

“The Main Street Program helps preserve the heart and soul of a community,” said Governor Brian Schweitzer. “Montana’s towns are known for their unique character and colorful history and this program not only maintains the essence of these communities, it also promotes economic development.”

The National Trust for Historic Preservation established the National Main Street Center in 1980 to assist nationwide downtown revitalization efforts. The Montana Main Street program is based on the Trust’s philosophy, which advocates restoration of the historic character of downtown while pursuing traditional development strategies such as marketing, business recruitment and retention, and public improvements.

The Main Street approach encourages communities to use their unique assets – distinctive architecture, pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, local ownership, and personal service – to rebuild their downtowns.

“There are no quick fixes for declining downtowns, but the Main Street program is a great start,” Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite said. “Success comes from a comprehensive and incremental approach. Main Street has proven itself as an effective downtown revitalization method.”

According to Julie Burk, Montana Main Street Program Coordinator, the seven Main Street communities (Libby, Polson, Stevensville, Butte, Anaconda, Livingston, and Red Lodge) in 2007 collectively created 106 new jobs, and 45 new businesses. Public improvement projects totaled almost \$3 million dollars and building improvements totaled \$1.5 million. Volunteers contributed more than 5,000 hours to their communities.

The Main Street approach focuses on four major areas, also called the 4-Point approach. The first area, organization, focuses on getting everyone in the community to work toward the goal of revitalizing a Main Street. The second area, promotions, focuses on attracting potential shoppers, investors, and businesses to the downtown. The third area, design, focuses on getting Main Street back into top-notch physical shape. The fourth area, economic restructuring, focuses on finding a new niche for Main Street's businesses.

Designated Main Street communities receive on-site technical training and consulting on a wide range of topics in the four categories of the Main Street approach: Organization, promotions, design, and economic restructuring. In addition, they participate in monthly phone conferences and attend yearly executive director's meetings and statewide conferences.

The benefits of becoming a Main Street community include:

- Improved building facades and rehabilitated buildings
- New businesses and jobs
- Growth of locally-owned businesses
- Expanded tax base
- More efficient growth and an alternative to sprawl
- Increased public and private investment in the downtown
- Preservation of historic and cultural resources
- Improved downtown and community image
- New and improved events to bring fun and foot traffic downtown

Applications can be downloaded from the Department of Commerce's website, [www.mtmainstreet.mt.gov](http://www.mtmainstreet.mt.gov), starting April 1, or by calling Julie Burk at 406/841-2756. Applications will be due July 1, 2008.

###